



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Ron DeSantis  
Governor

Shevaun L. Harris  
Secretary

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** February 14, 2022  
**TO:** Members of the Miami-Dade Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Lourdes Leconte, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** February 11, 2022, Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** April 08, 2022  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** Via Teams  
  
**Contact:** Lourdes Leconte  
**Office:** (786) 257-5173  
**Cell:** (305) 401-3374  
**E-Mail:** Lourdes.Leconte@myflfamilies.com

This taskforce has been active in the Miami 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 twenty-five to thirty 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 meeting!*

401 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Suite N-812 Miami, Florida 33128

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

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**MIAMI-DADE REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 11, 2022****ATTENDEES:**

Lourdes Leconte, Ileana Bustelo, Andrea Gordon , Henry Whitehead, Miesha Carr , Emily Hackerson , Emilie Goeser, Silvia Lopez, Yeen Perez, Veronica Rodriguez, Alicia Sante, Jamie Everett, Dr. Cheryl White, Lucy Tucker, Samantha Francois, Miriam Johana Garcia, Yeen Perez, Elmer Morales, Tamara Aparicio, Roketa Mansfield, Maria Avila, Connie Perez-Borroto, Diana Gomez, Marianne Lobo, Jackie Carrion, Eduardo Chavez, Sonia Arraut, Virginia Yarce, Leydi Sosa, Diana Gomez, Christine Reis, Jaime Cruz, Sylvia Acevedo, Mitsouko Puente, David Claros, Carlos Naranjo, Yvette McDonald, Jackie Carrion, Monica Farias, Elaine McArthur, Edgar Tobon, Evelyn Soto, Eduardo Moras, Maria Dominguez, Carlos Naranjo, Diego Castro, Viviane Saide, Roketa Mansfield, , Lourdes Pesante, David Brown, Sandy Ala, Miriam Rosario, Luz Perez, Paulina Velez, Valmarie Cruz, Sandrina Portillo, Abdul Rauf Khan, David Brown, Sonyetta Everett, Gisela Rhodes, Dr. Felicia Gil, Maria Avila, Diego Castro, Jorge Fernandez, Diana Formoso, Jocelyn Meza; Arriaga, Maria; Rosy Rodriguez; Janet Perez; Sherly Sanon; Melinda Williams; Kristina Francois; Sabine Balmir-Derenoncourt; Anabel Ordaz; Inelda Canate; Miriam Perez; Evelyn Trujillo; Sabine Balmir-Derenoncourt; Amador, Marielisa; Jean Joseph, Nadia; Felicidad Jerez ; Jamie Everett; Sandy Ala ; Jania Taleno

**INTRODUCTION:**

Lourdes Leconte, DCF Refugee Services Community Liaison welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

**PRESENTATIONS:**

- Leydi Sosa and Alicia Sante, from Youth Co-Op did a presentation on the job Market Analysis. Youth Co-Op, Inc. employment services team is constantly examining the labor market within the South Florida region to determine changes in the labor force hiring trends. They work with their monthly placements to evaluate the employers that are hiring, and a labor market survey is done to see if other employers within the same industries are also developing job opportunities and compare salaries.

Youth Co-Op, Inc. also analyzes the State of Florida DEO unemployment figures to measure which industries are creating jobs to make sure our marketing and job developing activities are in line with today's hiring needs; to provide Employment Opportunities for the Refugee and Entrant population in the Miami Dade Area. Unemployment rate decreased in the region by 4.5%, lower than last year's rate of 8.3%. The current Unemployment rate for the region is 3.8% in October 2021. The largest industry that employs the refugee population is manufacturing. The manufacturing employment totaled over 39,000 jobs in 2020. The average per hour amongst the refugee population in Miami Dade County is \$11.80 per hour.

- Krystina François, Director, Office of New Americans (ONA) provided a brief description on this new program within the Miami Dade county government. Miami-Dade County boasts the largest percentage of foreign-born peoples, even when compared with other immigrant hubs like New York City and Santa Ana. The Office of New Americans seeks to create a welcoming environment for all immigrants and provide them with access to the tools they need to flourish in their new communities. With their partners, ONA engages in the outreach

and promotion of naturalization opportunities, access to financial services, cultural events, and basic information sessions concerning how to succeed in various areas. Through resource sharing and community events, ONA hopes to simplify complex topics, like education and banking, to give our new neighbors the confidence they need to thrive.

- Vanessa Joseph, Esq. Catholic Legal Services, Inc. Spoke about a program called Building connections for a healthier Florida. Unite Florida is a coordinated care network of health and social service providers. Partners in the network are connected through Unite Us shared technology platform, which enables them to send and receive electronic referrals, address people's social needs, and improve health across communities. Unite Florida is sponsored by CVS Health, Aetna Better Health of Florida, the Health Care District of Palm Beach County, UnitedHealthcare Community Plan, and the Charles and Margery Barancik Foundation implemented with Sarasota Memorial Health Care System. The network is supported by a Florida-based Unite Us team focused on community engagement, network health and optimization, and customer success.

**REFUGEE SERVICES (RS) UPDATE:**

**ACCESS Program office ESS Updates: None**

**ANNOUNCEMENT:**

None

**REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE (*Sent via E-Mail in September and October*)**

**Meeting adjourned at 12:01 PM**

**LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – JANUARY 2022**

Legal Subcommittee Meeting January 18, 2022

Agenda

- 1. Introductions
- 2. The following agency did a presentation
  - a. USCIS
- 3. Next meeting date: February 15, 2022 @10 a.m.

Attendees:

- |                  |                                 |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Viviane Saide    | Minority Help                   |
| Berta Cassidy    | USCIS                           |
| Brad Ginter      | Catholic Legal Services         |
| Cassandra Suprin | Americans for Immigrant Justice |
| Jorge Vielman    | MCC East Coast                  |
| Oscar Alvarez    | Americans for Immigrant Justice |
| Inelda Canate    | Jackson Health System           |
| Andrea Pinzon    | Jacksonville Area Legal Aid     |
| David Claros     | Church World Service            |
| Angela Reid      | Oasis For Immigrants            |

- The naturalization outreach sessions will proceed along with TPS sessions with schools, libraries, and other entities.

o These will be exclusively virtually.

Questions:

- Brad stated “I read that memo that it seemed to be broader than healthcare works, other capacity essential workers of all kinds...”

o Berta responded that the 30-day notice is only for healthcare workers

- Cassandra asked, “The 30-days prior to expire, is it the extension of 180 days?”

o Berta responded “I would say it is the 30 days of 180”

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

March 15, 2022, 10:00 am

April 19, 2022, 10:00 am

**EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – FEBRUARY 2022**

**2022 REFUGEE TASK FORCE**

**EDUCATION APRIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING (Feb. 11, 2022)**

- REVEST currently has more than 900 students attending this Spring Term 2022. We already have students for the Summer 2022 Term starting May 2022. So far by the beginning of this current Term, 935 VESOL students have been enrolled program wide,

and around 400 are going to be enrolled for Summer 2022. Although we started this Spring with face-to-face classes still COVID 19 keeps impacting our students and instructors and we do our best to keep our classes going on by checking the needs for online classes when needed to avoid students losing their courses. Approximately out of those 400 students planning to start next Spring, 250 new students have been confirmed to test and enroll in the program throughout these months in our different Centers.

- The REVEST Program has been able to process over 55 vocational registrations so far in the current Spring term. REVEST continues with a campaign initialized in September 2019 (Fall 2197) to increase vocational registrations. We have continued to provide our students with Vocational Training Orientations during each VESOL Mimi-Term to start informing them, since lower levels, about their training options. These ongoing presentations also focus on the requirements for each type of course/Program, including VESOL completion, TABE scores and the in-state status; and include information about employment projections, growth and salaries as per a Labor market Analysis conducted by REVEST. In addition, the Vocational Coordinator attends Faculty meetings to discuss and develop strategies with the instructors to push the students' assimilation into vocational training, and the use of the vocational flyers in communicative activities. We continue providing training and advisement to advisors to be updated about changing procedures and system issues.
- REVEST/Miami Dade College continues to offer in person classes as well as on-line only courses. Students are attending scheduled classes and learning through a variety of resources including the Blackboard learning management system, My-Lab (Pearson Education) and Burlington English. We are proud of our staff for all their efforts to provide high quality learning at REVEST for all our students.
- All faculty attended faculty meetings January 25 2022. Instructors offered feedback on in person classes. We are maintaining vigilance on all safety protocols and procedures given by Miami Dade College. Instructors shared methods to make all classes interactive and retain students in this challenging time.
- REVEST has requested more information on the referral process to and from CRS (Comprehensive Refugee Services) and are requesting further clarification on this process and training on the FSSP (Family Self Sufficiency Plan). We also need clarification on the eligibility of services for I-220 A and B and their differences.
- The SAVES Trimester 2021-2 started on January 3, 2022 and will end on April 14, 2022. SAVES began early registration in November 2021 and continue registering students for the current term. Student enrollment as of February 7, 2022 increased to a total of 881 students, including all programs. Enrollment of new students also increased to 525

students, and enrollment in the Success Management Academy (SMA) GED in the Spanish program increased to 78 students. Vocational enrollment slightly decreased to 98 students. We are receiving inquiries from Afghans, Syrians, and Iraqis service providers agencies interested in referring students to the SAVES program.

- The SAVES District office keeps in close contact with the Comprehensive Resource Center (CRS), DCF, and SAVES schools to comply with and implement the new referral procedures. SAVES works very closely with school personnel and their administrators to provide the support and help needed to ensure that all services to students are provided.
- Students are enrolled in ESOL, ABE, SMA GED in Spanish, and a wide variety of vocational/technical courses to meet the demands of the job market. M-DCPS periodically research the job market situation to keep abreast of availability of new jobs and salary scales to make these opportunities available to SAVES students. Courses in greater demand in some SAVES schools are being added to the vocational programs offered at other schools. Also new vocational courses are created and offered to keep up to date with the current job market.
- Degree Translation services continue to be provided to eligible students with high school diplomas, associate degrees, and four-year degrees and higher, including licensing. Students will continue to report directly to the service provider agency until we are able to resume meeting in person with the students, SAVES, and the service provider.
- SAVES continues to serve clients at 14 schools and three technical colleges, George T. Baker Aviation, Miami Lakes, and D. A. Dorsey, Technical College, where eligible students receive services through vouchers. To better serve our clients, the voucher program has been extended to all adult education centers and technical colleges in M-DCPS.
- SAVES continues its marketing digital advertising campaign to reach refugees and asylees who are still within the five-year eligibility period and new arrivals that are not being served. This campaign includes the SAVES website, Spanish, and Haitian digital media, and multiple platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. We receive from the advertising agency the list of student's names, emails, and phone numbers of interested students. One of the SAVES District staff is assign to call them to provide information, recruit them and follow up. This campaign is yielding good results for recruitment, enrollment, and retention.
- New initiatives are being implemented to increase student enrollment. Information is gathered on students who were enrolled and returned as well as those students who did not re-enroll. Students enrolled are being monitored on absences, withdrawals, and attendance hours. District staff follows up with students to offer help to motivate them to continue their education.

- We continue our collaboration with Youth Co-Op and Work Force of South Florida. The agency provides supplementary services to SAVES students 16 to 24 years old that SAVES is not able to provide. Some of these services include, bus passes, mentoring, tutoring, community relationship enhancement, conflict management, financial leadership, assistance with work permits, summer job assistance, internship, and employment assistance. Work Force of South Florida works very closely with the eight (8) SAVES schools with the SMA GED in Spanish program and other SAVES schools.
- SAVES is also collaborating with the REVEST program to share ideas, review referral procedures and program contract requirements, get clarification, and keep updated on new developments and policies that affect both programs. We had a very productive meeting on the week of the December 10, 2021 Task Force meeting. We agreed to continue this practice for the benefit of both programs.
- The SAVES District office is providing additional support to SAVES schools and school contacts to facilitate implementation of the new contract requirements, policies, and referral procedures. In addition to visiting the schools, SAVES district staff calls all SAVES schools on a weekly basis to review requirements and procedures, answer questions, make clarifications, and remind them of pending deadlines. This new practice is very much appreciated by all SAVES schools.
- The SAVES website was updated to include the new Release of Information Form, and the List of new documents required in the student folders as required by the new referral procedures established in the Amended SAVES Contract. The website was updated to allow the school contacts easy access to all the forms to be included in the SAVES intake. New SAVES Student Success Stories are also uploaded to the SAVES website, and congratulation letters are sent to the schools to be forwarded to the students. Visit our SAVES website at [saves@dadeschools.com](mailto:saves@dadeschools.com)
- The SAVES third District meeting is scheduled for May 18, 2022. At this meeting, we will review any new information in the new Amendment and the implementation status of the previous Amendment. If you would like additional information about the SAVES program or are interested in being on our agenda, please email Dr. Felicia Gil at the SAVES District office [gilfelicia@dadeschools.net](mailto:gilfelicia@dadeschools.net)

<b>USCIS UPDATE – FEBRUARY 11, 2021</b>
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**USCIS Miami & Caribbean District  
November-December 2021 Update**

The Department of Homeland Security Operation Allies Welcome Unified Coordination Group is hosting a briefing with interagency partners to provide an overview of the resettlement process and the opportunities available to assist. The briefing will take place on Thursday, January 6, from 1pm to 2pm Eastern.

Audience

This briefing is open to all those with an interest in helping our Afghan allies resettle.

Topic

During this call, we will cover the following topic:

- The various ways available to assist with Afghan resettlement.

Subject matter experts from the Department of Homeland Security's Private Sector Office, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Department of State's Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Welcome.US will participate to answer questions.

You may submit questions in advance by emailing DHS Impact: [dhsimpact@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:dhsimpact@hq.dhs.gov) by Wednesday, January 5, at Noon Eastern. Please add "Briefing on Afghan Resettlement" in the subject line.

Note to media: This engagement is not for press purposes. Please contact the DHS Office of Public Affairs at [MediaInquiry@HQ.DHS.GOV](mailto:MediaInquiry@HQ.DHS.GOV) for any media inquiries.

We look applicant files an application for the underlying immigration benefit (including Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status), until Sept. 30, 2022.

The Department of Homeland Security is leading and coordinating ongoing efforts across the federal government to support vulnerable Afghans, including those who worked alongside us in Afghanistan for the past two decades, as they safely resettle in the United States. These Afghan arrivals generally fall within one of four categories that are eligible for resettlement assistance, entitlement programs, and other benefits available to refugees admitted under section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The SAVE program has developed a new Fact Sheet to serve as a stand-alone resource and an aid to train SAVE users regarding these four Afghan arrival categories. Please see the below link for further information.

<https://www.uscis.gov/save/whats-new/save-fact-sheet-information-for-save-users-afghan-arrival-categories-documentation-and-save>

**U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services Miami and Caribbean District  
Weekly Virtual Naturalization  
Information Sessions in English  
Every Wednesday in March 2022, 5-6 pm  
March 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, and 30th**

Presentations will be held via Webex:

<https://uscis.webex.com/uscis/j.php?MTID=me4b769a50b21b48ca74a5678e273bac4>

Meeting number (access code): 2760 438 1162 ; Meeting password: SuMJBYf@598

Learn about the requirements and process for naturalization

How to find resources on the USCIS website

Get your questions answered