



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Ron DeSantis  
Governor

Shevaun L. Harris  
Secretary

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** December 13, 2021  
**TO:** Members of the Miami-Dade Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Lourdes Leconte, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** December 10, 2021, Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** February 11, 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

## MIAMI-DADE REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES OCTOBER 10, 2021

### 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 ; Lieutenant Louisjean, Stevens; Jania Taleno

### INTRODUCTION:

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

### PRESENTATIONS:

- Sandy Ala, LMHC, Director, Case Management Programs, Jewish Community Services of South Florida

The mission of Jewish Community Services' original mission is to provide exemplary social services through compassionate and comprehensive programs that help people stay healthy and productive. By partnering with our funding agencies, sister organizations and local leaders, JCS continuously strengthens and solidifies its outreach and its impact. In this way, JCS continues to be a beacon of help, healing and hope as it addresses current needs with these three divisions:

1. Children & Youth Services, the program assist youth in any situation or circumstance. In keeping with its efforts to deliver help in neighborhood settings, many programs are offered at JCS offices, area schools, synagogues and community centers.
2. Adult & Family Services: JCS' network of services assists adults and families of all incomes in ways that strengthen individuals, marriages, relationships and family units, contributing to a healthier community. They help those searching for mental health counseling, job assistance, support for survivors of domestic abuse and a variety of other services.
3. Senior Support Services: JCS helps clients maintain their dignity and independence with diverse initiatives that include home care, personal emergency response systems, home-delivered meals, care management, adult day care and transportation services.

Jewish Community Services of South Florida (JCS) has been selected to provide resettlement services to Afghan Refugees in South Florida

- Ileana Vallejo, Family Support Manager,

**Early Learning Coalition of Dade and Monroe**

- Diana Formoso, clinical psychologist and professor, and Jocelyn Meza, B.A.

Psychology Trainee College of Psychology Nova Southeastern University (NSU)

Jocelyn shared that the team is currently involved in a project focused on the strengths and needs of unaccompanied immigrant minors. As part of the project, they are developing a resource guide for unaccompanied minors and their families (sponsors, foster families) across a variety of resource areas (for example, legal, educational, mental health, and/or advocacy). The team has a complete draft of the guide, and some of the NSU students have been reaching out to different organizations to verify the information they found online and make sure it is accurate. The team also wants to make sure that any organization serving unaccompanied youth is included in the guide because they don't want to overlook important resources.

Once the resource guide is finalized, the team will share it with everyone.

- Lieutenant Cooper, Community Outreach, City of Miami Police

The Miami-Dade Police Department has numerous programs and initiatives to help keep streets safe, protect children, better the community. Community outreach by the Miami police departments is an effort to engage with community members proactively, and not in a reactionary way.

**REFUGEE SERVICES (RS) UPDATE:****ACCESS Program office ESS Updates:**

Ileana Bustelo gave the update on the Food Assistance increase that client will receive

**ANNOUNCEMENT:**

None

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

**Meeting adjourned at 12:01 PM**

<b>LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – NOVEMBER 2021</b>
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<b>Immigration and Legal Issues Subcommittee</b>
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**No Reports**

<b>EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – DECEMBER 2021</b>
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**2021 REFUGEE TASK FORCE  
EDUCATION APRIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING  
(December 8, 2021)**

- REVEST currently has more than **500** students attending this Fall 2021 Term. We already have students for Spring 2022 Term from January 5 to April 22, 2022. So far around **590** VESOL students have been enrolled program wide in this Fall 2021, and around **700** are expected to be enrolled for Spring 2022. We have approximately **300** new students projected to test and enroll in the program throughout these months in our different Centers.
- The REVEST Program has been able to process around 190 vocational registrations so far in the current Fall term about to end. Likewise, we have already begun registrations for the Spring Term beginning on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and we have registered around 10 new students.
- 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.
- All faculty attended a virtual faculty meeting Nov. 9, 2021. Instructors offered feedback on in person classes. We are maintaining vigilance on all safety protocols and procedures given by Miami Dade College. 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.
- REVEST and SAVES met virtually on Dec.6, 2021 to discuss common goals and questions regarding 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). A meeting with Adult Education and DCF is being planned to focus on this process.

- SAVES Trimester 2021-1 will end on December 17, 2021. We will end this term with an enrollment of 756 students. Out of those, 277 are newly enrolled students, 132 are students enrolled in Vocational courses and 46 are students enrolled in the Success Management Academy (SMA) GED in Spanish 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.
- Trimester 2021-2 starts on January 3, 2022, and will end on April 14, 2022. We are currently doing early registration. Even though, we project an increase in enrollment for the coming term, we do not have at this time a count of the number of students that have pre-registered nor the total number that will enroll. 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. Some of the courses in greater demand in some SAVES schools are being added to the vocational programs offered at other schools. Miami Sr. Adult recently added Culinary Arts to their course offerings.
- Degree translation and validation services are being offered to eligible students. SAVES schools are referring a great number of students prior to December 17, 2021, to ensure students receive this valuable service prior to the end of the 2021-1 term. These services are provided to 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 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 will continue its marketing/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. This campaign is yielding good results for recruitment, enrollment, and retention.
- SAVES District personnel and school contacts follow up with students to ensure that they are aware of the instructional modes available to them according to their situations. Namely, 1. In person classes; 2. On-line classes; and 3. Dual Modality to ensure continuation of the instructional process. SAVES District and school personnel explain the

alternatives and assist students in accessing the instructional delivery method that best fits their needs.

- New initiatives are being implemented to increase student enrollment. Information is gathered on students who are enrolled as well as those students who did not re-enroll. Students enrolled are being monitored on absences, withdrawals, and attendance hours. Those who did not re-enroll are contacted and offered help to motivate them to continue their education.
- REVEST and SAVES school personnel met virtually on December 6, 2021 to review program requirements and common goals to facilitate collaboration to achieve program goals and a smoother implementation of required procedures.
- A meeting was requested by REVEST for DCF to meet in January with Education Providers, REVEST and SAVES to review referral procedures and program contract requirements to get clarification on the gray areas.
- The SAVES website was revised to incorporate all the new forms 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 in 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)
- SAVES school staff conducts orientation and training for students to promote the SAVES program and apprise the students of procedures, eligibility, services, and course offerings available to them.
- The SAVES second District meeting scheduled for January 13, 2022 was moved forward to November 10, 2021 to provide information on the Amendment #0006 and to explain the new organization of the Comprehensive Resource Center (CRS) and the referral processes for the wide range of services available to students . 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)

### USCIS UPDATE – OCTOBER 10, 2021

#### USCIS Miami & Caribbean District November-December, 2021 Update

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is temporarily waiving the requirement that the civil surgeon sign Form I-693, Report of Medical Examination and Vaccination Record, no more than 60 days before an 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.

[12/10 10:15 AM] Mansfield, Roketa F (Guest)

This temporary waiver will help applicants who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and related processing delays, which have sometimes caused delays in completing the immigration medical examination. Temporarily allowing applicants to submit their underlying application for an immigration benefit with a completed Form I-693, even if the civil surgeon signed more than 60 days prior, will allow individuals to complete the application process without the need to undergo another immigration medical examination if Form I-693 is otherwise valid.

USCIS is committed to breaking down barriers and making the naturalization process accessible to all who are eligible as part of President Biden's [Executive Order 14012](#): *Restoring Faith in Our Legal Immigration System and Strengthening Integration and Inclusion Efforts for New Americans*. The [Interagency Strategy for Promoting Naturalization](#), released on July 2, 2021, calls for a community-based approach to encouraging the roughly 9 million lawful permanent residents eligible for naturalization today.

Under the Biden-Harris administration, USCIS has taken a [number of steps](#) to support those seeking to naturalize. As part of the strategy, USCIS reinstated the Outstanding Americans by Choice (ABC) initiative, which was paused in November 2017, demonstrating our full resolve to honoring immigrants and their contributions to this country. The ABC initiative recognizes the significant achievements of naturalized U.S. citizens through civic participation, professional achievement, and responsible citizenship. USCIS will honor these recipients throughout our Constitution Day and Citizenship Day ceremonies.

Please see the latest revision of our local listing of U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Recognized Organizations attached. These are non-profit organizations with permission to practice immigration law through Accredited Representatives. This information may also be found on the DOJ website at: <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/recognized-organizations-and-accredited-representatives-roster-state-and-city> .