



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Shevaun L. Harris
Secretary

DATE: April 23, 2021
TO: Members of the Southwest Florida Refugee Task Force
FROM: Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: February 3rd, 2021 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: May 5th, 2021
Time: 1:00-3:00pm
Location: Microsoft Teams

Contact: Janet Blair
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David.Draper@myflfamilies.com

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 35 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!

SWFL REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was held via Microsoft Teams due to the pandemic. Janet Blair and David Draper represented Refugee Services, Dept. of Children & Families (DCF). There were 43 in attendance and the meeting began at 1:03pm.

Presentations

The first presentation was from Lutheran Services, Florida and focused on the community's generosity during holiday drives and events for refugee families in SWFL.

The second presentation was from Andrea Lypka with Integrated Learning/Learning Empowered. A variety of adult education classes are offered online by this Largo based program and are available free of charge to refugee clients living in SWFL. Course topics include Financial Literacy, ESOL and Citizenship and more information can be found at <https://www.learning-empowered.org/>

Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) Update

All offices continue to be open and working with clients. There has been a decline in new clients arriving in SWFL this past quarter, but employment is strong for those who are arriving with the ability to immediately work. The relationship with the Social Security Administration has improved and clients are being seen for new cards in all counties.

USCIS Update

The Fort Myers Field Office has caught up on 75% of the backlog in cases. Naturalization ceremonies are being held on most days of the week. Many changes are taking place under the new administration and providers are encouraged to check the website regularly for the most updated information: <https://www.uscis.gov/>

Refugee Services Updates:

David Draper encouraged all attendees to continue checking the DCF website for updated information at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/covid19/>

NEXT MEETING: May 5th, 2021 at 1:00pm, on Microsoft Teams

CONTACTS: Janet.Blair@myflfamilies.com or David.Draper@myflfamilies.com